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Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

Report of the Secretary-General

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Abbreviations

CICP	Centre for International Crime Prevention
DDA	Department for Disarmament Affairs
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DGAACS	Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services
DHA	Department of Humanitarian Affairs
DM	Department of Management
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPI	Department of Public Information
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DPKO/FALD	Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Field Administration and Logistics Division
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
INTERORG	Interorganizational bodies: Joint Inspection Unit Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions International Computing Centre Information Systems Coordination Committee
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OCSS	Office of Central Support Services
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs
OPPBA	Office of Programme Planning, Budgeting and Accounts
OSG	Office of the Secretary-General
UNCC	United Nations Compensation Commission
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFIP	United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and the United Nations Staff Pension Committee
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNOIP	United Nations Office of the Iraq Programme
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission established by the Security Council pursuant to Security Council resolution 687 (1991)

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 53/119 of 9 December 1998 on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution, including by providing statistics on the number and percentage of women in all organizational units and at all levels throughout the United Nations system, to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session. In the same resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed the goal of 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 in all categories of posts within the United Nations system, especially at the D-1 level and above, with full respect for the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in conformity with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, and also taking into account the continuing lack of representation or under-representation of women from certain countries, in particular from developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition.

2. The Assembly also welcomed the ongoing personal commitment of the Secretary-General to meeting the goal of gender equality and his assurance that gender balance will be given the highest priority in his continuing efforts to bring about a new management culture in the Organization, which will include full implementation of the revised special measures for women outlined in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (see A/53/376, sect. III). The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to ensure that heads of departments and offices develop gender action plans that establish concrete strategies for the achievement of gender balance in individual departments and offices, and to ensure, as far as possible, that the appointment and promotion of women will not be less than 50 per cent until the goal of gender balance is met.

3. Due to the short time period between the fifty-third session of the General Assembly and the opening of the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the present report updates information contained in the reports of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/53/376) and the composition of the Secretariat (A/53/375). The report includes the latest statistics on the representation of women and men in the Secretariat and in the United Nations system organizations, as well as information on further developments and measures taken for the achievement of gender equality.

II. Statistical update

Gender distribution of staff at the Professional and higher levels in the United Nations Secretariat

4. Further to the General Assembly's decision to extend the target of 50/50 gender distribution in posts subject to geographical distribution by the year 2000 to all categories of posts, the present report (see tables 1–4) expands the statistical tables contained in the above-mentioned report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat to include information on the gender distribution of all staff in the Professional category and above with appointments of one year or more. Similarly, for the purpose of human resources planning, the staff population reviewed in the above-mentioned report on the composition of the Secretariat has been enlarged to include all Professional and higher-level staff with appointments of one year or more, in addition to the traditional and considerably smaller population of staff on appointments subject to geographical distribution.

5. Since 1 January 1998, the increase in the percentage of women on appointments subject to geographical distribution has been marginal, rising only from 36.8 per cent to 37.1 per cent. As of 30 November 1998, there were 893 women out of a total of 2,404 staff on geographical appointments, as compared to 885 women out of a total of 2,407 staff on geographical appointments on 31 December 1997. While the overall increase in women's representation has been slight, notable progress has been made in improving the representation of women on geographical appointments at the D-1 level. The number of women at this level has risen from 51 in December 1997 to 65 as of 30 November 1998. This corresponds to a significant increase in women's representation at the D-1 level, from 24.3 per cent in December 1997 to 31.3 per cent in November 1998. As of 30 November 1998, the percentage of women on appointments subject to geographical distribution at the D-1 level and above was 26.9 per cent.

6. With respect to the gender distribution of all Professional staff with appointments of one year or more, discernible progress in improving women's representation has been made since June 1998, when gender statistics on this larger population of staff were initially compiled. During the five-month period from 1 July 1998 to 30 November 1998, the number of women with appointments of one year or more increased from 1,441 to 1,481. As depicted in table 4, the percentage of women with appointments of one year

or more was 35.2 per cent as of 30 November 1998, compared to 34.6 per cent in June 1998.

7. The largest increases in the representation of women with appointments of one year or more have been at the senior and policy-making levels. The number of women at the D-1 level and above increased from 89 in June 1998 to 99 in November 1998. This corresponds to an increase in women's representation at these levels, from 21.2 per cent to 23.1 per cent.

8. The Secretary-General, in his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, noted that the decline from June 1997 to June 1998 in the percentages of women promoted to the P-5 level (from 56.8 per cent to 35.6 per cent) and appointed at the P-5 level (from 55.6 per cent to 31.6 per cent) was of special concern. Although there has been a small increase in the number of women at the P-5 level since June 1998, the percentage of women at this level has declined further, both in the category of staff on geographical appointments and in the larger population of staff with appointments of one year or more. This is attributable to the considerably lower rate at which women are recruited and promoted to this level. During the period 1 January 1998–30 November 1998, only 23.5 per cent of the staff appointed at the P-5 level through the Appointment and Promotion Board were women. Of the staff promoted to the P-5 level through the Appointment and Promotion Board during this period, 38.4 per cent were women. This trend, if it continues, will have serious effects on replenishment at the D-1 level and above.

9. In order to significantly improve the representation of women in the Secretariat, departments and offices will continue their efforts to increase the rate of women's recruitment and promotion to over 50 per cent of all vacancies. This is particularly important in the case of the P-5 level, as indicated above. This grade level, therefore, will be given particular attention in the development of gender action plans in individual departments and offices. It is projected that 82 staff members, of whom 62 are men, will retire at the P-5 level by 31 December 2000. In order to maximize the opportunity for improving women's representation at this level, heads of departments and offices will be requested to assess the potential candidacies of women from within their departments and executive searches will be conducted to identify women candidates from other departments and offices, as well as from other United Nations system organizations and external sources. Member States, in turn, will be requested to propose women candidates, particularly from unrepresented and under-represented countries.

10. Concerted efforts must be made to increase the rate of women's recruitment at the P-4 to D-1 levels. Data obtained from the Appointment and Promotion Board secretariat indicate that for the period from 1 January 1998 to 30 November 1998, the average recruitment rate for women at these levels was 32.3 per cent, considerably lower than the corresponding promotion rate for women at the same levels of 47.4 per cent. Accordingly, the Secretary-General will hold managers accountable for the development of gender action plans in individual departments and offices, which will include specific targets for the appointment and promotion of women at a level above 50 per cent until the goal of gender balance is reached.

Gender distribution of staff at the Professional and higher levels in organizations of the United Nations system

11. Pursuant to the General Assembly's request in its resolution 52/96, statistics on the gender distribution of Professional and higher-level staff in all organizations of the United Nations common system, as of 31 December 1996, were provided to the General Assembly (A/53/376, annex II). The statistics were provided by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ), which issues annual statistics on the staff of United Nations system organizations. CCAQ is currently validating the personnel statistics of the organizations, as of 31 December 1997, for publication in spring 1999. Gender distribution statistics for staff in all organizations of the United Nations common system, as of 31 December 1997, will also be included in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

12. In order to assess the status of women's representation in organizations of the United Nations system in greater detail, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has entered into an agreement with the CCAQ secretariat for the design and production of a series of annual statistical tables on gender. Conclusions drawn from the evaluation of this data, including possible strategies for improving women's representation system-wide, will be submitted to the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and provided in future reports of the Secretary-General.

13. Further to its review of gender balance in the organizations of the common system at its spring 1998 session, the International Civil Service Commission, in its report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session,[1] requested the organizations of the United Nations system to bring the Beijing Platform for Action and the definition of

mainstreaming and its principles to the attention of all managers. The Commission observed that the issue of gender balance had to be part of an organization's overall human resources strategy, and that good management of human resources required that full attention be paid to the gender dimension. The Commission further requested its secretariat to issue a booklet on gender balance in the United Nations system.

14. In view of the considerably lower recruitment rate for women than men system-wide, particularly at levels P-5 and above, where women accounted for only 4.8 per cent of all recruitment during the period 1 January 1992–31 December 1996, the Commission requested the organizations to evaluate their recruitment pools to ensure that women with the requisite qualifications were being presented, and to engage in human resources planning if they were not already doing so. The Commission further requested its secretariat to establish a recruitment source database that targeted nationals from developing countries, particularly under-represented countries and countries with economies in transition. The Commission secretariat was also requested to develop, in collaboration with the organizations, a set of guidelines for those with decision-making responsibilities to support accountability for ensuring gender balance.

III. Update on the measures taken for the achievement of gender equality

Special measures for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

15. The revised special measures, which are described in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session (see A/53/376, sect. III A), are expected to be issued in Spring 1999.

Gender training

16. Following the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity training programmes in the Department of Political Affairs, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, additional training programmes on gender mainstreaming and gender issues in the workplace will be organized for other departments and offices in 1999.

17. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, with the assistance of the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, is currently preparing a gender training programme for all staff of the department, which will take into account the unique mission of the Department and the diversity of its workforce, which includes both civilian and military personnel. A gender training programme for staff at the United Nations Office at Vienna, originally scheduled to commence in November 1998, will be launched in February 1999. In addition to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the United Nations Office at Vienna, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia are planning to conduct gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity training for staff at their duty stations.

Amendments to the regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund on the entitlements of surviving spouses, including former spouses divorced from participants

18. In its resolution 53/210, *inter alia*, the General Assembly approved a number of modifications to the regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund which concern the position of spouses, in particular former spouses who were divorced from participants in the Fund and spouses who were married to participants following their retirement.

19. In relation to participants retiring or dying in service on or after 1 April 1999, the regulations have been amended to allow a divorced spouse to request a surviving former spouse's benefit, provided (a) the participant had been married to the former spouse for a continuous period of at least 10 years; (b) the former spouse had not remarried; (c) the participant's death had occurred within 15 years of the date when the divorce had become final, unless at the time of death the participant was under a legal obligation to pay maintenance to the former spouse; (d) the former spouse had reached the age of 40 (otherwise, the benefit entitlement would commence only after that age had been reached); and (e) the participant's pension entitlement from the Fund was not taken into account in a divorce settlement.

20. The Assembly also approved the establishment of an optional payment facility, whereby a portion of a pension benefit due to a participant might be paid to a former spouse, in conformity with a court order relating to maintenance or a divorce decree incorporating a settlement agreement, but only at the request of the participant. This amendment to the regulations is intended to assist participants in honouring maintenance orders or divorce settlements.

21. With respect to spouses married to Fund participants following their retirement, participants will have the option,

as of 1 April 1999, to purchase a prospective survivor's benefit for a spouse married after separation from the Organization.

22. The Assembly also approved the elimination of the provision of the Fund's regulations which required the termination of a surviving spouse's pension benefit upon the remarriage of the widow or widower. As of 1 April 1999, surviving spouses who remarry following the death of a participant will not forfeit their benefit, which will remain payable to them for life.

IV. Work programme for 1999

23. During 1999, priority will be given to the development and implementation of gender action plans in individual departments and offices. These plans will be tailored to the staffing requirements of individual offices, taking into account projected vacancies through the year 2000, including retirements by gender, and the availability of qualified women for inclusion in candidate pools. The objective of these plans will be to develop concrete and practical strategies on a department-by-department basis for implementing the goal of gender balance in the global Secretariat. The establishment and implementation of the gender action plans will also provide the Secretary-General with an important tool for measuring the performance of individual departments and offices, and for ensuring the accountability of individual managers.

24. Continuing attention will also be paid to the reform of human resources management policies and practices in the Secretariat. The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women will continue to cooperate closely with the Office of Human Resources Management to ensure that the gender dimensions of human resources management policies are fully taken into account in the reform process, and that the institution of new human resources management policies and procedures support measures for achieving the goal of gender equality in the Secretariat.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 30* (A/53/30).

Table 1

Gender distribution of all Professional and higher-level staff with appointments of one year or more in the United Nations Secretariat, by department or office and by grade, as of 30 November 1998[a]

Department/ Office	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		P-5		P-4		P-3		P-2		P-1		Total		GRAND TOTAL	Percent Women
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
dm/ohrm				1	1	2	2	2	8	12	10	10	10	9	3	5			34	41	75	54.7%
dpi	1				5	1	8	7	17	15	38	37	28	40	24	27			121	127	248	51.2%
dm	1				1		3	2	6	2	3	6	2	2		2			16	14	30	46.7%
unjspf					1		2	1	5	3	7	5	6	7		1			21	17	38	44.7%
dm/oppba			1		4		2	3	6	6	14	14	15	10	9	8			51	41	92	44.6%
ola	1		1		3		5	3	11	6	8	7	10	9	5	8			44	33	77	42.9%
desa	1		1	1	9	3	22	8	35	25	46	36	32	23	13	16			159	112	271	41.3%
osg	3	1	1	1	2	3	6		2	3	4	2	3	5	2	1			23	16	39	41.0%
dgaacs	1		1		2	1	9	5	64	37	132	77	115	91	10	15			334	226	560	40.4%
dda	1				1		1	1	2	3	3	3	2	1	2				12	8	20	40.0%
ohchr		1			1		3	1	10	6	17	4	18	16	7	9			56	37	93	39.8%
undcp	1				2		6	2	19	3	13	8	15	15	4	9			60	37	97	38.1%
unscom								1	1	1	2		1	1	1				5	3	8	37.5%
uncc			1		2		4		2	1	9	4	26	13	15	16			59	34	93	36.6%
dpa	1		2		6	2	6	6	16	6	17	8	11	10	5	4			64	36	100	36.0%
unog	1				2	1	6	3	27	19	71	47	86	32	13	12			206	114	320	35.6%
ocha	1				3		3		11	3	4	4	6	6		2			28	15	43	34.9%
unon							1		4	1	17	7	15	11	7	4			44	23	67	34.3%
oios	1					1	2	2	7	3	19	9	11	3	4	4			44	22	66	33.3%
unfip			1								1	1							2	1	3	33.3%
dpko	1		2		4		10	2	11	5	27	12	17	12	7	6			79	37	116	31.9%
dm/ocss			1		1		4	1	13	3	25	10	25	16	7	5			76	35	111	31.5%
eclac	1				1		6	3	15	4	34	15	23	12	23	13			103	47	150	31.3%
unov					2		3	2	13	5	31	12	20	9	5	5			74	33	107	30.8%
unep	1		2		5	3	23	4	36	4	49	21	31	23	9	13		1	156	69	225	30.7%
escwa	1					1	6		14	3	20	5	7	10	5	4			53	23	76	30.3%
ece	1					1	7	2	13	3	17	6	21	11	7	5			66	28	94	29.8%
escap	1					1	7	1	20	3	31	12	30	12	12	13			101	42	143	29.4%
unchs					2		1	1	6	2	14	4	8	4	1	2			32	13	45	28.9%
unoip	1				1		1		1		2	2			2	1			8	3	11	27.3%
unctad	1		1		2	1	14	2	35	6	37	8	36	25	20	8			146	50	196	25.5%
dpkofaid	2	1	7	1	9		17	1	30	4	105	14	90	44	40	31	2	6	302	102	404	25.2%
eca	1					1	5	3	26	4	36	8	38	13	17	6			123	35	158	22.2%
interorg					12		3		3	1	1	2		1		1			19	5	24	20.8%
cicp					1			1	2		5		3	1					11	2	13	15.4%
Total	25	3	22	4	85	22	198	70	491	202	869	420	761	497	279	256	2	7	2732	1481	4213	35.2%

Source: Office of Human Resources Management data.

[a] Including 11 JIU inspectors of the D-2 grade, all of whom are men.

Table 2

Gender distribution of all Professional and higher-level staff with appointments subject to geographical distribution in the United Nations Secretariat, by department or office and by grade, as of 30 November 1998

Department/ Office	USG		ASG		D-2		D-1		P-5		P-4		P-3		P-2		P-1		Total		Grand Total	% of Women
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
unscom								1											0	1	1	100.0 %
unoip	1								1			2				1			2	3	5	60.0 %
dm/ohrm				1	1	2	2	2	8	12	9	10	10	9	3	5			33	41	74	55.4 %
dpi	1				5	1	8	7	17	15	38	37	28	39	23	27			120	126	246	51.2 %
unjspf							2	1	4	3	6	5	4	6		1			16	16	32	50.0 %
dm	1				1		3	2	6	2	2	6	2	2		2			15	14	29	48.3 %
dgaacs	1		1		2	1	9	5	9	4	3	5	4	9	1	2			30	26	56	46.4 %
undcp	1				1		3	1	6	1	4	7	8	7	3	6			26	22	48	45.8 %
dm/oppba			1		4		2	3	6	6	13	14	14	7	9	8			49	38	87	43.7 %
unog	1				2		5	3	5	5	9	9	18	11	10	10			50	38	88	43.2 %
dpko	1		2		3		8	2	4	5	12	9	10	10	4	6			44	32	76	42.1 %
unep	1				1	1	1		3	1	2	3	1	1	2	2			11	8	19	42.1 %
desa	1		1	1	9	2	20	8	34	25	46	36	30	23	13	16			154	111	265	41.9 %
unon							1			1	4	1	3	2	2	3			10	7	17	41.2 %
dda	1				1		1	1	2	3	3	3	2	1	2				12	8	20	40.0 %
ola	1		1		3		5	3	10	6	7	6	10	7	5	6			42	28	70	40.0 %
ohchr		1			1		3	1	9	6	16	4	14	15	5	4			48	31	79	39.2 %
osg	1	1		1	2	2	5		2	3	4	1	3	2	2	1			19	11	30	36.7 %
dpa	1		2		6	1	6	6	14	6	15	8	11	10	4	3			59	34	93	36.6 %
ocha	1				3		2		9	3	4	3	4	5		2			23	13	36	36.1 %
oios	1						1	2	5	2	13	8	9	3	4	3			33	18	51	35.3 %
unfip			1								1	1							2	1	3	33.3 %
escwa	1					1	6		13	3	17	5	5	9	5	4			47	22	69	31.9 %
escap	1					1	7	1	19	3	26	10	20	10	12	13			85	38	123	30.9 %
unchs					1		1	1	5	2	9	3	6	2	1	2			23	10	33	30.3 %
eclac	1				1		6	3	14	3	33	12	21	10	22	12			98	40	138	29.0 %
dm/ocss			1		1		4	1	12	3	24	8	19	11	7	4			68	27	95	28.4 %
unov					2		2	2	8	3	8	2	9	4	4	2			33	13	46	28.3 %
dpkofald	1						4	1	7	2	4	1	2	2		1			18	7	25	28.0 %
ece	1					1	7	2	13	3	17	6	20	8	7	5			65	25	90	27.8 %
unctad	1		1		1	1	14	2	35	6	37	8	36	24	19	7			144	48	192	25.0 %
eca	1					1	5	3	25	4	35	8	34	11	14	6			114	33	147	22.4 %
cicp					1			1	2		4		3	1					10	2	12	16.7 %
interorg					1				3		1					1			5	1	6	16.7 %
unec			1		1				1										3	0	3	0.0 %
Total	22	2	12	3	54	15	143	65	311	141	426	241	360	261	183	165			1511	893	2404	37.1 %

Source: Office of Human Resources Management data.

Table 3

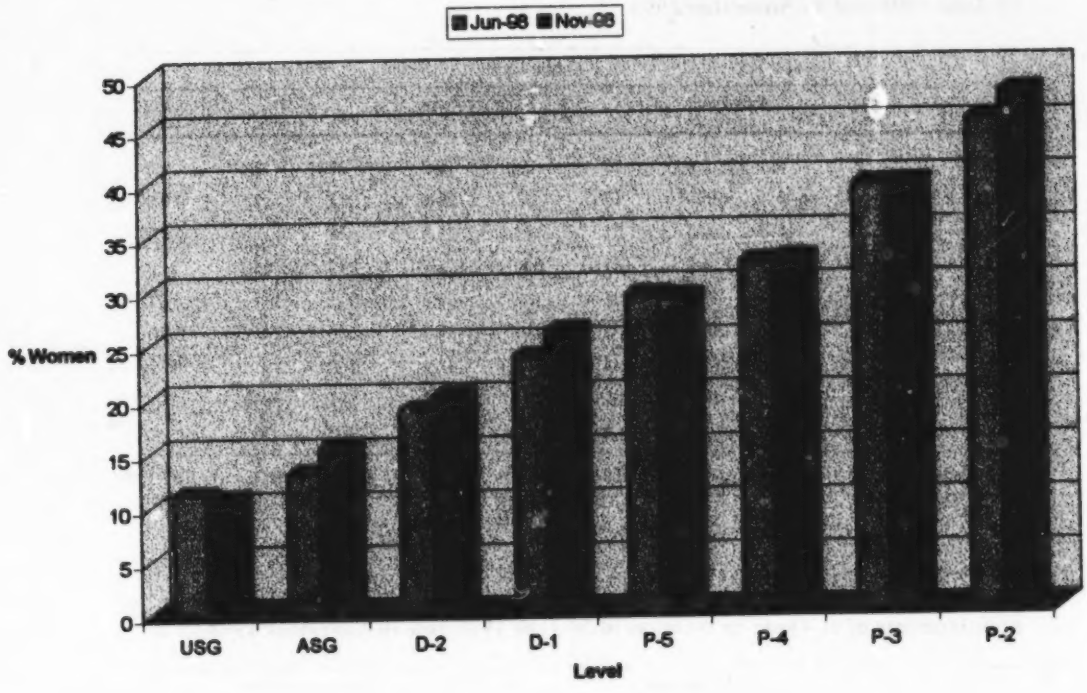
Comparison of the gender distribution of Professional and higher-level staff on appointments subject to geographical distribution, as of 31 December 1997, 30 June 1998 and 30 November 1998

	31 December 1997			*30 June 1998*			*30 November 1998*		
Level	*Men*	*Women*	*Percentage of women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Percentage of women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Percentage of women*
USG	17	1	5.6	22	2	8.3	22	2	8.3
ASG	9	3	25.0	12	3	20.0	12	3	20.0
D-2	51	14	21.5	51	14	21.5	54	15	21.7
D-1	159	51	24.3	149	60	28.7	143	65	31.3
P-5	302	147	32.7	305	139	31.3	311	141	31.2
P-4	442	229	34.1	435	241	35.7	426	241	36.1
P-3	358	259	42.0	348	253	42.1	360	261	42.0
P-2	184	181	49.6	193	173	47.3	183	165	47.4
P-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**1 522**	**885**	**36.8**	**1 515**	**885**	**36.9**	**1 511**	**893**	**37.1**

Table 4

Comparison of the gender distribution of Professional and higher-level staff with appointments of one year or more, as of 30 June 1998 and 30 November 1998

	30 June 1998			*30 November 1998*		
Level	*Men*	*Women*	*Percentage of women*	*Men*	*Women*	*Percentage of women*
USG	24	3	11.1	25	3	10.7
ASG	20	3	13.0	22	4	15.4
D-2	78	18	18.8	85	22	20.1
D-1	209	65	23.7	198	70	26.1
P-5	483	200	29.3	491	202	29.1
P-4	868	414	32.3	869	420	32.6
P-3	737	480	39.4	761	497	39.5
P-2	299	249	45.4	279	256	47.9
P-1	5	9	64.3	2	7	77.8
Total	**2 723**	**1 441**	**34.6**	**2 732**	**1 481**	**35.2**


Jun-98
Nov-98
% Women
50
45
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
USG
ASG
D-2
D-1
P-5
P-4
P-3
P-2
Level

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Commission on the Status of Women the attached report, which was prepared by the United Nations Development Fund for Women in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 50/166, on the activities of the Fund to eliminate violence against women.

* E/CN.6/1999/1.

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Annex

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 50/166, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of taking holistic, coherent and coordinated actions to eliminate violence against women at the national, regional and international levels. In the same resolution, the General Assembly designated the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to play a catalytic role in promoting joint actions and to strengthen its activities to eliminate violence against women in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action.[1] Pursuant to that resolution, the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women was established in 1996 and became operational in 1997.

2. Some highlights of the activities of UNIFEM in the past year pursuant to the mandate given by the General Assembly are described below. In this connection, UNIFEM takes note of the recommendations made by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session and the conclusions on violence against women adopted by the Commission at that session.[2] UNIFEM attaches importance to the conclusions as policy guidance and recognizes that the clarification of targeted areas of action contained therein[3] are particularly helpful to UNIFEM in ensuring that its operational activities are consistent with the policy direction developed at the intergovernmental level.

II. Provision of resources for international, regional and national actions: Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women

3. Special attention should be drawn to the increased role of UNIFEM in respect of the operational activities under the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women. The Trust Fund has achieved growing recognition by the international community not only as a multilateral grant-making mechanism that provides financial support for international, regional, national and grass-roots actions, but also as a centre for learning that plays a catalytic role regarding sharing of good practices on efforts to eliminate violence against women.

4. Regarding its financial status, UNIFEM received in 1998 the sum of $1.8 million[4] from Governments and non-governmental organizations in contributions to the Trust Fund. The contributions were utilized to support 29 new projects that had been selected by the inter-agency Project Approval Committee at its third meeting, which was held in May 1998.[5] As of January 1999, all 29 projects became operational.[6] Over 100 project proposals will be reviewed for the next grant cycle in 1999.

5. Regarding the issues addressed by the Trust Fund, 11 projects focused on problems rooted in specific forms of violence against women, namely domestic violence (six projects), health, including female genital mutilation (two projects), trafficking in women (two projects) and femicide (one project), while the rest of the project portfolio addressed general problems of violence against women. Three projects were undertaken by gender units within central or local governments, while the rest are being executed by local, national, regional or international non-governmental organizations. The strategies utilized in each project varied according to the issue targeted, and include awareness-raising, training of professionals, public education including legal literacy, advocacy, servicing for victims, and action-oriented research.

6. Violence against women is a prevalent global phenomenon and its elimination requires concerted actions at all levels. The Commission on the Status of Women stressed the importance of sharing information and requested the United Nations to take action to "consider ways to share good practices and lessons learned, including establishing a readily accessible database of good practices and lessons learned with regard to all forms of violence against women".[7]

7. For its part, UNIFEM worked on increasing its institutional capacity to develop ways to share the experience gained from the implementation of the Trust Fund. Of particular importance is the creation of the learning component for the Trust Fund. Primary functions of the new component are to conduct overall review and analysis of the project portfolio, extract lessons and results obtained

through its interventions and contribute to improve the funding policies and guidelines of the Trust Fund. As the only international funding mechanism that is exclusively devoted to addressing the problem of violence against women, the Trust Fund offers a unique prism from which the phenomenon of violence against women in all its forms can be analysed and explored globally. The learning component of the Trust Fund, which became fully operational in January 1999, will serve as a global resource centre to review, analyse and extract important lessons from its grant-making activities, and facilitate the goal of identifying most appropriate points of intervention as well as best methods and practices on initiatives to combat violence against women across regions.

8. The elimination of violence against women is a dynamic and continuous process. In the dynamic scope of this process, the learning component will provide tools to implementing agencies and beneficiaries of the Trust Fund to follow up on the results achieved and interventions made during the implementation of the projects. It is critical for UNIFEM to learn about the social and political implications of the activities involved, especially negative factors that may adversely affect the outcome of the implementation of projects. The learning component will also assist the organization in identifying best practices that could be shared across regions.

9. UNIFEM is currently involved in the process of developing a methodological framework for the dissemination of the results produced by the learning component to Governments, other agencies and bodies of the United Nations, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and members of civil society at the national, regional and international levels. Of particular importance is the involvement of the media, which will play a key and vital role in the dissemination process.

III. UNIFEM/inter-agency regional campaigns on violence against women

10. As a contribution to the United Nations commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNIFEM launched a series of inter-agency regional campaigns to eliminate violence against women in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific. The three regional campaigns share the goal of raising public awareness about violence against women as a violation of human rights, highlight its economic and social costs to society, and bring together the efforts of the United Nations system in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. Campaign events have been widely covered by the media in all regions, have spearheaded changes in cultural attitudes and behaviour and have been pivotal in creating a favourable environment for the introduction of changes in national legislation. More important, the regional campaigns have contributed to the opening of a discussion on issues traditionally considered taboo in many societies and are having an impact on the general attitudes prevalent at the community level to this issue, raising questions about male involvement and responsibility in its eradication. The campaigns have also re-energized a constituency to advocate for changes in key institutions such as the judiciary, law enforcement, health care, the media and education.

IV. Efforts to support and encourage partnerships for networking

11. **Videoconference entitled *A World Free of Violence against Women*.** Another important contribution that UNIFEM has made towards the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action in the past year was to further increase partnerships for networking with all relevant institutions, including non-governmental organizations, at all levels. One of the groundbreaking actions is the UNIFEM initiative, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, to host a global inter-agency videoconference entitled *A World Free of Violence against Women*. The videoconference will take place on International Women's Day, 8 March 1999, during the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women.[8]

12. The objectives of the event are to present best examples of strategies to end violence against women worldwide, transcending national, cultural, religious and socio-economic boundaries; to elicit global support for national, regional and international actions; and to give visibility to the implementation of the recommendations set out in the Beijing Platform for Action. With the support of advanced videoconferencing technologies, the event will be conducted at five sites simultaneously, linking four regional sites in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America with the General Assembly Hall at United Nations Headquarters, which will serve as the main site. Participants include representatives of Governments, United Nations agencies, the European Commission and non-governmental organizations, as well as those who represent the regions not linked to the site in New York. The entire event of the

videoconference will be visually recorded for distribution to educational, research and other institutions, including universities and schools, and the public in general for education, training and other purposes.

13. The event will be enriched by reports on the outcomes of the inter-agency regional campaigns to eliminate violence against women in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia and the Pacific, which were initiated by UNIFEM in 1998. While each of the three campaigns is launched in the light of regional priorities and concerns, common goals are also set across regions, including the goal to change attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence, which constituted one of the targeted areas of action that were identified by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session.

14. **Launch of the Internet Virtual Working Group entitled "End-violence".** The preparatory process for the videoconference provides a good opportunity to establish partnerships for global networking. In order to facilitate in-depth discussion at the videoconference, UNIFEM launched, in collaboration with the World Bank and Global Knowledge Partnership, an Internet Working Group discussion entitled "End-violence".[9] The Working Group offers a unique virtual site dedicated to the discussion of the issue of violence against women. It is utilized to exchange information, share experiences and discuss a variety of strategies used for ending violence against women. The Working Group discussion will now become a model for a WomenWatch initiative to enhance civil society involvement in the five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action.

15. Since the launch of the Working Group on 8 October 1998, its membership has been growing. According to statistical data as of 7 December 1998, 1,019 individuals joined the Group as subscribers from 80 countries, including 44 developing countries. Fifty-seven per cent of the subscribers are from outside North America. A conservative estimate suggests that at least 29 per cent are from developing countries and countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): Africa (7 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (15 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (3 per cent), and Central and Eastern Europe and CIS (4 per cent).

16. The results of the discussion relating to strategies will provide substantive input for the videoconference on 8 March 1999. Issues discussed by the Working Group include law reform; access to justice; awareness-raising; changing social and cultural norms; networking and advocacy; information and communication technology; the role of non-governmental organizations, international organizations and Governments; international and regional human rights procedures; training; the role of the media; sexual and reproductive health; political participation of women; education; changing male attitudes and behaviour; and the relationship of violence against women with general human rights conditions.

V. Legal advocacy: process of establishing the International Criminal Court

17. Support for international, regional and national actions to increase legal literacy for the general public and to promote legal advocacy for specific purposes is another area that UNIFEM has emphasized in the past year. Of particular relevance was the support for non-governmental organizations that intervened in the drafting process for the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Women's Caucus for Gender Justice in the International Criminal Court, with the support of UNIFEM, played a crucial role in advocating the need to incorporate a gender perspective in the Statute and provided the legal and technical expertise to the participating delegations. The action contributed to achieving the explicit recognition that acts of violence against women in war situations — that is, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity — constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, which will be subject to the jurisdiction of the Court. UNIFEM is further committed to continuing to support organizations monitoring the process towards the establishment of the Court in order to ensure that women's interests and concerns are fully integrated into the basic documents that will guide the functioning of the Court.

VI. Conclusions

18. The activities described above reflect some of the highlights regarding the role of UNIFEM in the elimination of violence against women. The Trust Fund will continue to support innovative initiatives aimed at implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, so that UNIFEM can play a catalytic role in sharing the strategies derived from its operational experience with all relevant actors. In this context, UNIFEM is currently reviewing the operation of the Trust Fund in order to further clarify its role and sharpen its future strategies. In this way UNIFEM hopes to contribute to meeting the needs of the international community with

respect to obtaining concrete and practical information on best practices for application everywhere and to develop a more concerted, holistic and comprehensive approach to ending violence against women.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sect. I.

[3] The six targeted areas of action are: an integrated, holistic approach; provision of resources to combat violence against all women; creation of linkages and cooperation with regard to particular forms of violence against women; legal measures; research and gender-disaggregated data collection; and change attitudes. See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sects. I.A–I.F.

[4] In addition, a donor pledged approximately US$ 400,000 to the Trust Fund on 17 December 1998.

[5] The Project Approval Committee meeting was attended by participants representing the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization and the Joint United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome. Invitations were also extended to two members of the non-governmental organization community working in the area of violence against women.

[6] Six projects in Africa, 7 projects in Asia and the Pacific, 4 projects in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS, 10 projects in Latin America and the Caribbean and 2 global projects.

[7] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 7* (E/1998/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution IV, sect. E.

[8] For information about the videoconference, see the UNIFEM Web site: http://www.unifem.undp.org.

[9] Detailed information about the Working Group online discussion, including membership, is available at the UNIFEM Web site (see note 8).